Dancing to Another Tune: Classical Music in Nightclubs and Other Non-traditional Venues

The large purpose-built concert hall is essentially a nineteenth-century invention.[1]

In the United Kingdom today, performances of classical music in non-traditional venues are widespread. Recent examples include a string quartet concert in the depths of a Lake District slate mine, chamber music in a grungy Camden pop venue, and an orchestral performance in the loading bay of the Royal Albert Hall; in Scotland, the East Neuk Festival boasts that all of its concerts occur in venues 'not originally designed as a concert hall'; while the BBC Proms feature an orchestral performance in a South London municipal car park for the second year running.[2] The phenomenon is by no means exclusive to the UK. In Toronto you could hear Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in a dilapidated power plant; in Berlin Radialsystem V, a pump station-turned-arts centre, regularly presents classical music; in Texas, a string quartet offers works by Ravel and Grieg in a cave; and, in southern France, the classical music festival Musique à la Ferme (Music on the Farm) celebrates its tenth anniversary.[3] To some observers, such performances are the 'new normality';[4] and discourse on the topic is growing, involving the musicians themselves, arts organisations, and social commentators.[5]

How and why did this trend emerge? Since the concert hall building boom of the late nineteenth century,[6] performances of orchestral and chamber music have typically taken place in purpose-

[1] Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 21.

[2] The Modulus Quartet performed new compositions in a slate mine in Honister, Yorkshire, on 6 May 2017; the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment performed works from the classical canon at the Camden Assembly, London, on 23 May 2017; London Contemporary Orchestra performed works by Steve Reich, Johnny Greenwood and others in the loading bay of the Royal Albert Hall on 4 March 2017; venues at the East Neuk Festival included church halls and cafes; the Multi-Story Orchestra performed works by Bach, John Adams, and Kate Whitley at Bold Tendencies car park in Peckham, London, on 26 August 2017. For further details of these events, see: http://honister.com/modulus-quartet-6th-may-2017/; http://camdenassembly.com/events/the-night-shift/; http://www.lcorchestra.co.uk/events/royal-albert-hall/; http://www.eastneukfestival.com/venues/; https://www.bbc.co.uk/events/epc5q9 (all accessed 21 July 2017).

[3] The Toronto Symphony Orchestra performed Beethoven's Fifth Symphony at the Hearn Generating Station, Toronto, on 21 June 2016; the Mahler Chamber Orchestra performed works by Beethoven, Bach, Haydn, Cage, and others at Radial System V on 21 May 2016; the Axiom Quartet performed works by Grieg, Ravel, Bernstein, and others in a cave in Boerne, Texas, on 5 September 2015. For further details, see: http://nationalpost.com/entertainment/music/can-classical-music-reach-a-new-audience-through-unlikely-venues/wcm/ad9cc17e-83ce-4c52-aab9-a38c6335bf7a; http://www.radialsystem.de/rebrush/en/rs-radialsystem-v-einleitungstext.php; https://www.visitboerne.org/calendar/concert-cave-axiom-quartet; https://musiquealaferme.com/language/en/home (all accessed 22 July 2017).

[4] Tim Rutherford-Johnson, quoted in Thom Andrewes and Dimitri Djuric, *We Break Strings: The Alternative Classical Scene in London* (London: Hackney Classical Press, 2014), 71.

[5] See, for example: Berlotti Buitoni Trust, 'Is the Concert Hall the Only Place?' [2015], www.youtube.com/watch?v=FefcZzAIGLA; and Tom Hodge, 'Musical Places in Unusual Spaces', *Huffington Post* (29 September 2014), http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/tom-hodge/classical-music-venues_b_5875526.html (both accessed 22 July 2017).

[6] Examples of concert halls built during this period include Musikverein (Vienna, 1870), the Royal Albert Hall (London, 1871), Carnegie Hall (New York, 1891), and Wigmore Hall (London, 1899).

built locations. And while the emergence of experimental music in the mid twentieth century prompted some performances to move into non-traditional venues,[7] concerts featuring works from the classical canon generally stayed put in the concert hall. Change only began in the early 2000s, when, in different countries and independently of one another, the founders of two ground-breaking club nights decided to present classical music in non-traditional venues, such as nightclubs and bars, as a *marketing strategy*, that is to reach a new and younger audience.

Following a trial phase in Hamburg, "Yellow Lounge" held its first 'classical club night' at Cookies, one of Berlin's most popular night club, in May 2003.[8] Ten months later, "Nonclassical" chose Cargo, a trendy club in a disused East London railway yard, for its first event. The two series emerged from very different backgrounds: Yellow Lounge was founded by a working group within the classical music department of Universal Music Group (UMG), the world's largest music corporation.[9] Nonclassical, on the other hand, was founded by the composer Gabriel Prokofiev (grandson of Sergei), whose background in electronic music had inspired him to set up Nonstop, a small experimental dance music label. Despite the founders' differences in size and, by extension, financial resources, the motivations for setting up the concert series were remarkably similar – both aimed to attract a younger audience to classical music and both had concluded that the genre's traditional presentation was insufficient for that purpose. Christian Kellersmann, then General Manager, Classical Music, recalls:

> At the start of my employment... at Universal stood a central question: how do we reach a new, young audience? None of my friends or pop colleagues listened to classical music. This was less because of the music itself but rather because of its image: dusty, conservative, morose… For us, the freshness, the sexiness, the spontaneity, the modern presentation was missing in the classical world. We wanted to listen to the music with our friends. But the way into the concert hall was not an option for them (yet).[10]

[7] Yoko Ono, for example, hosted concerts in her loft in New York City, in collaboration with composer La Monte Young in the early 1960s. For a comprehensive history of "alternative" venues, see Sarah May Robinson, *Chamber Music in Alternative Venues in the 21st Century U.S.: Investigating the Effect of New Venues on Concert Culture, Programming and the Business of Classical Music* (DMus diss.; University of South Carolina, 2013), 4–35.
[8] See Christian Kellersmann, 'Der Frack ist bitte an der Garderobe abzugeben' (19 August 2013), http://christiankellersmann.de/der-frack-ist-bitte-an-der-garderobe-abzugeben/ (accessed 22 July 2017).
[9] Along with Sony Music Entertainment and Warner Music Group (WMG), UMG is one of the three "majors", which between them account for over two thirds of global record label revenue (68.7% in 2016). See https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/global-market-shares-2016-sony-and-warner-gain-on-universal-as-indies-rule/ (accessed 22 July 2017).
[10] Kellersmann, 'Der Frack ist bitte an der Garderobe abzugeben'; translation by the author.

Prokofiev expresses very similar sentiments:

> I felt strongly that my classical stuff would appeal to my peer group, but when it was performed in the traditional classical setting most of the audience would be twice my age. There's nothing wrong with that, but it seemed a shame that my friends weren't there. That was a big motivator in getting Nonclassical going: thinking you've got to present classical music like other music.[11]

Presenting classical music 'like other music' meant adopting elements from the pop music sector, such as musicians communicating directly with the audience, DJs playing music—classical or otherwise—before and after the live performance, and using venues that were frequented by young attendees. Following on from positive press responses and, more importantly, numerous enthusiastic concertgoers, both series flourished. Yellow Lounge and Nonclassical established monthly events in their "home" cities and also presented their concepts in other European countries. Both projects, then, were influential forerunners and have had a noticeable impact on the industry. One further organisation, founded some years later, also contributed to the development of presenting classical music in new venues and less formal formats: the chamber music series "Classical Revolution" held their debut event in San Francisco's Revolution Café in September 2006 and went on to inspire musicians in the United States and Europe to set up their own series in bars, bookshops, and art houses.[12]

Indeed, the number of classical music concerts in non-traditional venues worldwide today is too great to chronicle here; instead, this chapter will focus on British (and particularly London-based) developments. To that end, Figure 11.1 outlines seven prominent organisations and initiatives. The chapter draws on interviews with representatives of six of these (inactive since 2013, Yellow Lounge London is the exception). It also considers how classical music concert practice in non-traditional venues differs from that of traditional venues and offers reasons why such non-traditional events are consistently successful in attracting younger audiences.[13] Finally, the

[11] Gabriel Prokofiev, quoted in Jessica Duchen, 'Gabriel Prokofiev on the BBC's Ten Pieces, Nonclassical, and a new Carnival of the Animals', *The Independent* (24 June 2015), http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/classical/features/gabriel-prokofiev-on-the-bbcs-ten-pieces-nonclassical-and-a-new-carnival-of-the-animals-10340546.html (accessed 22 July 2017).
[12] The chamber music series "Classical Revolution" was founded by Charith Premawardhana. See Alberta Barnes's interview with Charith Premawardhana for further details: http://blog.sharmusic.com/blog/bid/83997/Interview-with-Charith-Premawardhana-Founder-of-Classical-Revolution (accessed 22 July 2017).
[13] The organisations' own surveys use a threshold of under 35 years of age to define 'young audiences'.

chapter examines the impact such concerts have had, and continues to have, on the classical music sector as a whole.

[Insert Fig. 11.1]

'Physical sites create particular atmospheres'[14]

Physical surroundings have a powerful, immediate, and distinct impact on the people who visit them. Imagine entering a hospital ward at night, compared to walking into a Central London pub. Environmental psychologists show how the design of a physical place not only influences the mental state of those in the space, but also that is shapes their attitudes and behaviours.[15] Still the most common location for classical music concerts, a purpose-built concert hall "sends" clear signals about expected behaviour: fixed seating in rows discourages social interaction in the auditorium; the grandeur of the building is imposing; and the physical division between the raised stage and the auditorium makes clear that no interaction between audience and performer is expected. Indeed, Christopher Small describes how entering a concert hall results in new attenders 'lowering their voices, muting their gestures, looking around them, [and] bearing themselves in general more formally'.[16] His observation is supported by a recent study by Lucy Dearn and Stephanie Pitts, who examined how 40 young people responded to a chamber music concert and found that participants were concerned about whether they were welcome and how they should behave in the traditional concert setting.[17]

Linked intrinsically to the physical site of the concert hall, the concert "rituals" of classical music performance tend to grant attenders a passive role, expecting them to remain silent, motionless, and seated (derided by some as the "sit-and-stare" model).[18] This leads to the question, what happens when the performance is relocated to a different type of venue? Kate Whitley and Christopher Stark of the Multi-Story Orchestra argue that:

[14] John Connell and Chris Gibson. *Sound Tracks: Popular Music Identity and Place* (London: Routledge, 2003), 204.
[15] See, for example, Sally Augustin, *Place Advantage: Applied Psychology for Interior Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley, 2009), 1.
[16] Small, *Musicking*, 23.
[17] See Lucy K. Dearn and Stephanie E. Pitts, '(Un)popular Music and Young Audiences: Exploring the Classical Chamber Music Concert from the Perspective of Young Adult Listeners', *Journal of Popular Music Education*, 1/1 (March, 2017), 58.
[18] See, for example, Igor Toronyi-Lalic, 'Imagined Occasions', *The Arts Desk* (28 May 2013), http://www.lcorchestra.co.uk/reviews/imagined-occasions-3/ (accessed 23 July 2017).

> By escaping the spaces that classical music normally inhabits it becomes possible to escape from its traditional associations, and [to] potentially attract audiences who might find those associations—but not the music—alienating.[19]

For Whitley, the neutrality of a Peckham car park, the orchestra's home venue, was particularly attractive, for it could be used as a 'blank canvas'.[20] No space, however, is entirely free from connotation, and the choice of location for a classical music concert can be a powerful statement. Some organisers consciously use the distinctly different connotations raised by an alternative venue to recontextualise the music they programme. Prokofiev's starting point for his first Nonclassical events, for example, was to choose venues that were in no way associated with the 'elite' values attached to classical music:

> I wanted [the venue] to be the last place where you'd ever imagine seeing a classical ensemble. It was a rebellious thing to do and it was this idea of "why can't these posh instruments, these old-fashioned museum things, actually be in a gritty club?" It makes it much more exciting. Somewhere that felt gritty and grimy and had attitude and felt like a venue where anything could happen. I didn't want anywhere too glitzy [or] shiny, because then it almost comes back into the elitist field of classical music.[21]

Claiming gritty and grimy venues 'where anything could happen' for a musical purpose is reminiscent of the rave movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In fact, the similarities between spaces then used for raves and now for classical concerts are striking, as Sivan Lewis' description of rave venues shows: 'The derelict locations – warehouses, car parks, railway arches – with their dusty floors and industrial ambience, offer only crumbling walls, a loud sound system, and the potential for anything to happen.'[22]

Taking classical music out of the concert hall and into industrial spaces and nightclubs is a self-assertive, even rebellious, act. It represents the next generation striving to "claim" music for themselves and distancing it (and themselves) from the traditional classical sector. With the exception of Yellow Lounge, the founders of all organisations discussed in this chapter were in their twenties or early thirties when they started out. Indeed, several of them, including the

[19] Kate Whitley and Christopher Stark, 'Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Car Park', *The Guardian* (20 June 2014), https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2014/jun/20/peckham-car-park-multi-story-orchestra-sibelius (accessed 23 July 2017).
[20] Whitley, quoted in Andrewes and Djuric, *We Break Strings*, 70.
[21] Gabriel Prokofiev, interview with the author, 27 June 2017.
[22] Sivan Lewin [1997], quoted in Connell and Gibson, *Sound Tracks*, 205.

founders of the Little Orchestra and the London Contemporary Orchestra (LCO), stress that they do not even see themselves, or their organisations, as part of the classical music industry. Similarly, Emily Robbins (neé Freeman), who co-founded the "Limelight" series at the 100 Club, was aware of and enjoyed the presentational contrast of her concert series:

> [The 100 Club, one of London's oldest rock venues] gave us that fabulous strapline 'putting classical music in a rock'n'roll setting.' So [it was] a historical club where The Rolling Stones and The Beatles had played over the years, and we thought that was quite cool. At the time we went in, there was still graffiti in the dressing rooms of all the bands that had played there. And you've got [acclaimed opera singer] Danielle de Niese coming in her finery and singing on the stage there, so that was a nice juxtaposition for us.[23]

As John Connell and Chris Gibson have argued, physical sites create particular atmospheres, and the use of space can lend credibility to an event.[24] By presenting classical music in venues that are run down or lack splendour, an entry barrier can be removed for those who might be deterred or intimidated by a more traditional concert hall.

Practical Implications

Beyond atmosphere, the physical realities of using a space not designed as a place for listening to acoustic music warrant attention. Sound conditions, for example, are often less than ideal. Reverberation times vary greatly between venues, and noise entering from the external environment can be problematic. Some observers find this a distinct drawback:

> I mean, playing in Peckham car park [the home venue of the Multi-Story Orchestra], acoustically, is a nightmare; it's opened up to the elements, there's a train-line going along, so it's a very different playing experience to playing in the Wigmore Hall.[25]

Many attenders, however, value what they call a 'connection to the real world', as Whitley describes:

[23] Emily Robbins, interview with the author, 27 June 2017.
[24] See Connell and Gibson, *Sound Tracks*, 204.
[25] Tim Rutherford-Johnson, quoted in Andrewes and Djuric, *We Break Strings*, 71.

> [Any negative reaction] is always countered by someone at the performance that says, "Oh, I absolutely loved it, and it was so magical when the train went by. It really seemed to fit with the music and it made me feel like it was part of the real world." [Any sound from the trains] gives it a real-world context and setting, instead of experiencing it in isolation. It makes you feel like part of the world as it goes on.[26]

Organisers take a range of approaches to managing acoustics in non-traditional venues: some use light amplification to counter any sound problems the performance might face (Limelight, Nonclassical, Yellow Lounge, and the Night Shift); others choose non-traditional venues whose acoustics happen to be very well-suited to non-amplified instrumental music (The Little Orchestra at Oval Space); while others match specific works to the acoustics of specific venues (LCO), as Co-Artistic Director Robert Ames explains:

> It's about being sensitive to the music. If you put on a really quiet piece by [Morton] Feldman and you're going to do it in a warehouse that's surrounded by traffic, then obviously that won't work, no matter how cool the warehouse is. But if you put on a work by Feldman in an insulated, amazing, clean gallery space, where people can go on a pilgrimage to listen to twelve hours of Feldman in complete silence, then that's going to work pretty well.[27]

Organisers must also consider that most non-traditional venues, such as nightclubs and industrial spaces, lack fixed seating or, indeed, any seating at all. Some of the organisers use this as an opportunity, hiring seating and creating arrangements to promote greater sociability. For the Little Orchestra's concert, for example, attenders have the option to book a 'two-person comfy sofa' (Fig. 11.2). At the 100 Club, Limelight likewise arranged atmospheric seating on round tables covered with white tablecloths and decorated with tea lights.

[Insert Fig. 11.2]

[26] Kate Whitley, interview with the author, 3 August 2017.
[27] Robert Ames, interview with the author, 12 July 2017.

Other organisers take the view that seating is neither necessary nor appropriate for their type of event; in fact, some argue that having the audience stand plays an important role in the concert experience, further distinguishing the atmosphere from that of a concert hall and giving attenders the freedom to move. John Holmes of the "Night Shift" explains:

> We don't want everyone to be sitting down: it's supposed to be a gig. Otherwise you recreate the atmosphere at a concert hall. Also, it's harder to move around and to get to the bar when people are sitting down.[28]

Prokofiev agrees that seating can lure concertgoers to slip back into the traditional format, at risk of losing openness. He insists that having the audience stand is crucial to Nonclassical's success, for it replicates how attenders engage with visual art:

> If you're standing and you can go to the bar you have that autonomy that you have in an art gallery. In a gallery you're in charge and can just go to the next room if you like. No one is forcing you to look at a work, and no one is telling you "this is good" or "this is bad", and if you're interested, you stay. As soon as you have that autonomy I think you pay more attention and your mind opens up more because you're in control. On the most basic level, if you are standing, you are free to leave.[29]

While the practical realities of performing in non-traditional venues can be challenging, they also open up choices of how to present a concert that are not always available in the traditional concert hall.

'Presenting classical as if it were rock'[30]

Due to the growth of the live music industry over the past two decades,[31] the majority of under-35s are familiar with popular music concert practices. Several organisations are openly adopting those practices, with Nonclassical asserting that 'the success of the night partly stems from the fact that it presents classical as if it were rock or electronic music.'[32] In practical terms, this approach manifests itself in several ways. Rather than adopt the standard classical concert format

[28] John Holmes, interview with the author, 20 June 2017.
[29] Prokofiev, interview.
[30] 'Nonclassical: About Us', http://www.nonclassical.co.uk (accessed 29 July 2017).
[31] The substantial growth in the wider live music industry is well documented. See, for example, Peter Tschmuck, *The Economics of Music* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Agenda, 2017), 34.
[32] 'Nonclassical: About Us', http://www.nonclassical.co.uk (accessed 29 July 2017).

of two halves of 45–60 minutes of music with an interval in between, the programme is presented in 'sets' (see, for example, Fig. 11.3) which are typically shorter and provide more or longer breaks that allow attenders to visit the bar or socialise. Often, more than one artist appears, performing at different times during the evening. Artists for the Limelight series were also announced as "headline" and "support", in keeping with popular music practice,[33] and, as Holmes underlines, such events are deliberately referred to as gigs, not concerts.

Another important distinction is that latecomers are admitted at any time, contrary to the traditional practice whereby entry is denied once a performance has begun. The time advertised is not the concert's start time, as would be customary, but the bar opening time, with the performance beginning half an hour, an hour, or even 90 minutes later.[34] Many such concert series also begin later in the evening than traditional concerts; the Night Shift takes its name from this idea, with events typically starting at 8.30pm, an hour after doors open (see Figure 11.3). Nonclassical, Yellow Lounge London, and others feature DJs before and after the live performance—another common practice at popular music concerts. Musicians at non-traditional venues also usually perform in casual dress, mirroring the majority of the audience rather than donning the type of formal attire (suits or dinner jackets for men; evening dresses for women) associated with classical, and particularly orchestral, music.

[Insert Fig. 11.3]

A final comparison concerns visual presentation. Several organisers use coloured lighting for their concerts, or project on a wall images or close-ups of musicians performing. Yellow Lounge, for example, makes VJs (video jockeys) an integral part of its events. As arts consultant Alan Brown observes, lighting and special effects are a vital part of larger-scale popular music concerts, and anybody having attended one would bring a heightened expectation for visual stimulation with them to a classical music concert.[35] Indeed, borrowing concert practices from popular music can be a powerful tool, especially to connect with young people. Dearn and Pitts show how a group of under-25 classical concertgoers drew heavily on 'the vast learning that they bring from their own musical worlds', using predominantly popular music-related knowledge as their point of reference.[36]

[33] Robbins, interview.
[34] Alternatively, two start times are advertised: "doors open" and "concert start".
[35] See Alan Brown, 'Smart Concerts: Orchestras in the Age of Edutainment [12 January 2004]', https://knightfoundation.org/reports/magic-music-issues-brief-5-smart-concerts-orchestr (accessed 29 July 2017).
[36] Dearn and Pitts, '(Un)popular Music and Young Audiences', 58.

Socialising or Listening?

By giving the audience time and space to socialise before, after, and even during performances, organisers of classical music concerts in non-traditional venues acknowledge there is more to attending a concert than just listening to music. Several authors have discussed the social aspect of concert-going: Pitts describes 'the close relationship between social and musical enjoyment that is at the heart of concert attendance';[37] Nicholas Cook likewise states that a concert is conceived as 'a social occasion rather than a music delivery system';[38] but, as Leon Botstein argues, anonymity within the audience has become the norm at many classical music events in traditional halls.[39] The contrast with, say, the Little Orchestra, who emphasise the social side of their concerts, could not be greater: 'We've designed a night out that is social, relaxed, intimate and fun… Arrive and enjoy some drinks with friends, and maybe make some new ones.' As Prokofiev says, events in non-traditional venues aspire to be 'a choice for a musical night out.'[40]

Such organisers therefore recognise that many attenders of classical concerts seek the same benefits—relaxation, entertainment, and an opportunity to socialise—that any other leisure activity would provide.[41] This seems to contradict traditional and still dominant perceptions that audiences primarily attend classical music concerts to be intellectually stimulated through "high" art or because of a desire to learn something. It also prompts several questions: Is the music, which is seemingly the prime focus in a traditional concert hall, just a by-product of the non-traditional event? And does it matter what the audience's motivation is to attend, be it to relax, socialise, or be intellectual stimulated or educated? In the case of the LCO, Ames feels that his audiences attend for social *and* musical reasons and that these motivations are equally valid: 'If people come for the social experience I hope they are inspired by the music. If they come simply for the music I hope they have a good social experience.'[42] Holmes agrees:

> There is nothing wrong with the social experience being the primary motivation: we're not trying to trick them into experiencing some high art! It's about integrating

[37] Stephanie E. Pitts, 'What Makes an Audience? Investigating the Roles and Experiences of Listeners at a Chamber Music Festival', *Music & Letters*, 86/2 (May, 2005), 269.
[38] Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 398.
[39] See Leon Botstein, 'Music of a Century: Museum Culture and the Politics of Subsidy', in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth Century Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 41.
[40] Prokofiev, interview.
[41] See Bonita M. Kolb, *Marketing for Cultural Organizations: New Strategies for Attracting Audiences* (3rd edn; Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 72.
[42] Ames, interview.

> classical music into someone's night out. It's structured so they can fit dinner, drinks around it, or go out clubbing afterwards (not that I think that actually happens very often)… It's an even more special moment for performers when it's clear that the audience is not expecting to enjoy the music, or when they have no expectations of the music but then they do enjoy it.'[43]

Increased social activity has further practical implications. While the purpose-built concert hall has enforceable, segregated spaces for listening (the auditorium) and socialising (the foyer), part of the appeal of many concerts at non-traditional venues is that the bar, a focal point for socialising, is in the same location as the performance and that attenders are welcome to have a drink with them while they listen. This means, however, that noises from glasses clinking and bottles being opened might be heard during the performance. The concern might be that musicians must now 'earn silence',[44] or that such background noise either devalues the music or fails to give it due respect and attention. Prokofiev feels that low level noise is a small price to pay:

> It's unavoidable that you sometimes get a little disturbance but I think it's definitely worth that sacrifice. The problem is that, otherwise, you go down a slippery slope of this kind of "silence is sacred", "this is a religious experience" type of concert thing, when as soon as someone just moves or says sometime a few people turn around, look daggers at them and shush. In our events we want to make it and keep it relaxed. We don't want it to have this uptight stuffiness, this tension that you can get quite easily… People can come and go with their drink.[45]

In practice, such practical problems are minor, and all organisers agree that their audience are largely attentive and "self-regulating". Robbins explains that while Limelight audiences were encouraged to move around, they tended to wait to visit the bar until a certain piece had finished.[46] Prokofiev agrees, explaining how 'it's kind of natural, as in when the music is good and… demands silence, everyone knows and then when someone's loud it's a case of just being rude. So, it's quite subtle, but it seems to work by itself.' Similarly, violinist Maggie Faultless (OAE) has summarised her experience of performing for Night Shift concerts:

[43] Holmes, interview.
[44] Oliver Coates, quoted in Andrewes and Djuric, *We Break Strings*, 68.
[45] Prokofiev, interview.
[46] Robbins, interview.

> You might think that the informality of these venues would create a casual relationship with the music—I'm often asked if pub venues means it's noisy, but not a bit of it (the clank of a few glasses from the bar aside). In fact we've found that there seems to be an enhanced degree of listening as people are much more directly involved in the music making, and this intense listening creates the atmosphere of the performance.[47]

It is precisely the informality that makes performances in non-traditional venues unique and particularly welcoming to new attenders. To revert to a traditional format would be to destroy what makes the events unique. By redefining the "listening situation", the spectrum of what is acceptable in terms of etiquette and behaviours at classical music concerts is changing.

Several organisers consciously try to create a listening environment with which attenders *choose* to engage, as Whitley explains:

> Although people are free to wander, get a drink from the bar, take a look at the view, or hang around at the back of the crowd and dip in and out of watching the performance if they like, the set-up is designed to create a focused listening environment.[48]

Ames pursues a similar theme:

> We [the LCO] create a situation whereby we use lighting, programme certain types of music, and amplify music sometimes, in a way that creates a really "big" listening experience in those spaces. So although we give people the freedom to walk out, or go to the bar if they want to, we try and create situations where actually really listening to the music quite intensely is the ideal situation. But we don't force it.[49]

To examine this balance between socialising and listening, it is important to consider that concertgoers are not necessarily motivated to attend because they wish to experience the greatest possible sound quality. The coughing and shuffling of the most dedicated audiences make for an authentic listening experience, but not one as "clean" as a high-quality audio recording heard at

[47] Maggie Faultless, 'Purcell and a Pint: Welcome to a New Kind of Classical Concert', *The Guardian* (6 February 2012), https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2012/feb/06/classical-music-in-a-pub (accessed 30 July 2017).
[48] Whitley and Stark, 'Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Car Park'.
[49] Ames, interview.

home.[50] The reasons for attending a classical concert are many, and the music itself can be experienced in a number of ways. As Cook asks:

> What kind of rational cost-benefit calculation might lead people to go to a concert? The answer, clearly, has to do with the things that are not delivered by even the highest-quality headphones.[51]

Moreover, to Prokofiev, all levels of engagement with the music are acceptable, after all 'people are listening when they are standing by the bar… and are taking it in. [That's] still a valid experience.'[52]

From Presentational to Participatory

Thomas Turino distinguishes between 'participatory' performances, where there is no distinction between artist and audience (for example, a church congregation singing hymns), and 'presentational' performances, where one group provides music for another (for example, musicians for their audience).[53] Turino also proclaims European classical music concerts—in traditional concert halls—as

> perhaps the most pronounced form of presentational performance, where the audience sits still in silent contemplation while the music is being played, only to comment on it through applause after a piece has been completed.[54]

Contrast this with Bonita Kolb, an arts marketing specialist, who finds that 'people are no longer willing to defer to authority… [for] they want control of their own destiny [and] are impatient with passive experiences.'[55] As a result, she argues, audiences want to participate actively in leisure activities, rather than observe idly.

[50] Admittedly, while the vast majority of works in the classical music canon are available in recorded form, this is not the case with contemporary music in the classical tradition.
[51] Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 395.
[52] Prokofiev, interview.
[53] Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 26/51.
[54] Turino, *Music as Social Life*, 52.
[55] Kolb, *Marketing for Cultural Organizations*, 47.

If this is true (or, indeed, desired by concert organisers), how can performances of classical music grant audiences a more active role? Looking first at the artist-audience relationship, performances of classical music in non-traditional venues typically reduce the physical distance between the groups. In stark contrast to the raised stages and fixed seating typical of traditional halls, Figures 11.2 and 11.4 show just how close the audience, whether standing or sitting, can be to the performers at non-traditional venues. Removing such physical barriers may not necessarily grant audiences a more active role, but it alters the hierarchy between musicians and the audience, putting them on a more equal footing. The close proximity also encourages concertgoers to talk with musicians after the performance and to get a closer look at scores and instruments.

[Insert Fig. 11.4]

The Little Orchestra acknowledges that this proximity and engagement are central to its mission, as it promises:

> An hour of beautiful music, delivered in an intimate, atmospheric space, where you can almost reach out and touch the orchestra. Each piece will be introduced by Nicholas [Little, the orchestra's founder], the conductor, to help you find a way in, if you need it.[56]

This closeness can benefit performers, too. Robbins explains that Limelight's similar intimacy was key to persuading classical music "stars" to appear during the series, while Holmes also notes how musicians are interested in and feel able to respond individually, being physically closer to the audience than usual. In a similar vein, Faultless elaborates:

> [The Night Shift] is about empowerment. Audiences want to have a bit more ownership of what they're listening to. The best performances involve a three-way relationship—the music (i.e. what's on the page), the audience and the performers. The performers react not only to the written notes but to each other and most importantly, to the audience. But all too often in today's concerts, the third part of that equation is forgotten. Often when we're performing you can't even see beyond the first couple of rows, let alone to the back of a thousand-seat concert hall.[57]

[56] From the The Deal section of the Little Orchestra website, http://thelittleorchestra.com/#thedealrow (accessed 29 July 2017).
[57] Faultless, 'Purcell and a Pint'.

This ethos unites each of the organisations this chapters surveys: contrary to traditional classical music concert practice, performers usually introduce themselves or the works to be performed either before the concert or between works.[58] Such direct communication makes audience members feel acknowledged and develops 'a valued sense of performer-audience rapport', as Melanie Dobson describes in her study on new audiences for classical music.[59]

Social media is enabling a further kind of audience participation. Lucy Bennet acknowledges how social media has not only allowed concertgoers 'to find and connect with each other, but also to tweet and text concert set lists, photos and other information as they happen.'[60] At Night Shift events, the audience is encouraged to communicate with organisers and each other in this manner, and the number of such interactions—tweets, Instagram posts, and so forth—peaks when performers, rather than members of the administrative team, invite them.[61] Engaging with audiences through social media can also occur in the lead up to the concert, providing potential concertgoers with information about the event and gaining their trust as an organisation. Ames explains:

> That's the joy of social media: having connections with the audience… You build a narrative around the concert before it's even started. So you can start introducing them to pieces [and] snippets of music behind the scenes… and can let people know what they're going to get, or what they're getting into, before they come. You build trust with the audience whereby they trust you to present them with something that's going to inspire them.[62]

In turn, prospective attenders can voice their opinion on aspects of the concert, expressing likes and dislikes, and potentially shaping future events.

The Multi-Story Orchestra is the only organisation (of this chapter) that makes audience participation an explicit part of their concerts. The orchestra's innovative activities intensify

[58] The level of direct communication with the audience varies between organisations. While direct communication is an all-important part of concerts by the Little Orchestra, the LCO usually only interacts directly with its audience at smaller and more intimate concerts.
[59] Melissa C. Dobson, 'New Audiences for Classical Music: The Experiences of Non-attenders at Live Orchestral Concerts', *Journal of New Music Research*, 39/3 (2010), 111.
[60] Lucy Bennet, 'Texting and Tweeting at Live Music Concerts: Flow, Fandom and Connecting with other Audiences through Mobile Phone Technology', in *Coughing and Clapping: Investigating Audience Experience*, ed. Karen Burland and Stephanie Pitts (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), 89.
[61] Holmes, interview.
[62] Ames, interview.

attenders' experience of the music itself and enable direct attender/performer engagement prior to the performance (see Fig. 11.5). Whitley describes how its "Living Programme Note" initiative works:

> "Living Programme Note" performances are where we split the orchestra into smaller groups of six or seven who are then spread around the car park, and the audience is free to wander around to meet and chat with them… The musicians play bits of the piece and create participatory things for the audience to do: for [Mozart's] Jupiter Symphony's sarabande movement [II.] they were teaching the audience the difference between a waltz and a sarabande and getting them all… to sing, to clap to its rhythms, or learn a dance. So, [that's] the first 45 minutes [before the "proper" performance]. Then, everybody congregates in the orchestral space and there's a "warmth" from the audience right away, just like when they clap, when the orchestra sits and starts. Everyone is so engaged already.[63]

While social media is available to any organisation and musicians can address the audience regardless of the type of venue, the flexible use of space is a specific advantage of non-traditional venues, allowing organisers to engineer close physical proximity between performers and audience and, if desired, use the space for specific participation activities.

[Insert Fig. 11.5]

Concerts in Non-traditional Venues and the Classical Music Market

No studies have sought to establish the share that events in non-traditional venues enjoy in the wider classical music market, however the active series discussed in this chapter regularly sell out, which indicates substantial interest.[64] Additionally, the common view, supported by data collected by several organisations, suggests that non-traditional venues are more successful (than traditional halls) in attracting a younger audience to classical music, and an audience that is *new* to the genre. A 2015 survey conducted at Nonclassical's "Minimalism Night" (held at East London nightclub XOYO) found that 89% of the 350 attenders were aged 35 or under, and that

[63] Whitley, interview.
[64] Recent sold-out concerts include: The Little Orchestra performing Beethoven's *Eroica* at Oval Space (capacity 200) on 4–5 May 2017; The Multi-Story Orchestra performing Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony at Bold Tendencies car park in Peckham (cap. 600) on 17–18 June 2017; and the LCO performing a new work by composer Catherine Lamb in The Tanks at Tate Modern (cap. 350) on 6 September 2017.

58% of attenders did not regularly attend classical concerts.[65] Data published in 2013 showed that 85% of the Night Shift's regular audience was aged 35 or under, with 15%–20% overall new to classical music.[66] A 2016 survey by the Multi-Story Orchestra found that 52% of its concertgoers were aged 35 or under, and that 55% attended classical music events once a year or less.[67] The LCO performed to a total audience of over 12,400 in 2016/17 and supplied information about their social media following: 61% of their 6,800 Facebook followers and 66% of their 7,000 Twitter followers were aged 35 or under.[68]

These surveys, while modest in scale, indicate the tremendous potential of non-traditional venues and events to increase attendance of classical music concerts, particularly among young people. After attending a Nonclassical concert, American critic Greg Sandow wrote:

> The mainstream institutions are missing a lot. They're missing potentially large ticket sales and the artistic and cultural opportunity of a lifetime—a chance to join with the newest, most powerful force in the art they claim to represent, and to connect classical music with a new generation of smart younger people.[69]

How, then, might these institutions tap into this new audience? Some traditional concert venues have responded by exploring spaces within their building not originally designed for live performances. An early example was the 2011 "Harmonic Series" at London's Southbank Centre, conceived and curated by cellist Oliver Coates, and 'designed to bring unexpected sounds to unexpected corners of the Royal Festival Hall.'[70] Elsewhere in London, the Barbican Centre hosts "Sound Unbound", a biannual festival of sixty concerts in 'an unusual range of venues' that gives audiences the opportunity 'for informal and close-up interactions' with performers.[71] Stephen Pritchard describes this ambitious event:

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[65] The unpublished survey was provided to the author by Nonclassical.
[66] See Culture Hive, *Case Study—The Night Shift: Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment* (2013), http://culturehive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Case-study-OAE-The-Night-Shift.pdf (accessed 21 July 2017).
[67] The unpublished survey was provided to the author by the Multi-Story Orchestra.
[68] The figures were provided to the author by LCO. They must be seen in the context of social media being more popular among younger generations.
[69] Greg Sandow, 'A Young, Hip, Classical Crowd', *The Wall Street Journal* (28 March 2009), https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB123819267920260779 (accessed 29 June 2017).
[70] See Jessica Duchen, 'The Cellist Who Wants to Shake up London with a Classical Mystery Tour', *The Independent* (21 January 2011), http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/classical/features/the-cellist-who-wants-to-shake-up-london-with-a-classical-mystery-tour-2190095.html (accessed 29 July 2017).
[71] See, for example, https://www.barbican.org.uk/full-line-up-announced-for-sound-unbound-the-barbican-classical-weekender-29-30-april-2017 (accessed 29 July 2017).

> For the price of a colourful wristband, 3,000 people—54% of whom… were new to the venue—savoured a vast musical tasting menu, served up informally over a weekend in short sessions across the entire centre, in foyers and on outdoor terraces, in halls and performing spaces.[72]

Other large institutions have collaborated with some of the organisations this chapter has chronicled: the Royal Opera House gave Nonclassical free rein over its 750-capacity Paul Hamlyn Hall, an event that quickly sold out (Fig. 11.4); the BBC Proms in 2016 and 2017 featured Multi-Story Orchestra concerts—in its original car park rather than at the Royal Albert Hall; and the LCO performed at The Tanks at Tate Modern in 2017, also as part of the BBC Proms.[73]

Such institutions are attracted to new sales, of course, but this is inextricable from the audience's age range and their newness to the art form. Arts Council England's mission statement, 'great art and culture for everyone',[74] strongly implies that it expects every organisation it funds to strive for diversity. National Portfolio Organisations (that is, those organisations Arts Council England regularly funds) looking to widen their reach might do well to try out a new venue, collaborate with existing organisations, or adopt some of the innovations examined in this chapter. At the same time, the risk of alienating existing audiences is real (socialising during concerts, for example, might be at odds with the expectations of a long standing subscription concert attender) and warrants careful thought about which, if any, practices established organisations might wish to adopt. Looking ahead, it is perhaps necessary for larger organisations to cater for various markets, satisfying the needs of an established audience as well as those of potential new audiences interested in less formal formats and new settings. This strategy is still rarely adopted, although there are exceptions, including the London Symphony Orchestra presenting "Open Air Classics", which sees the orchestra relocate from its usual Barbican and St Luke's venues once a year to perform open-air in Trafalgar Square.

Fears will need to be alleviated if non-traditional venues and events are perceived to threaten the traditional model of classical concert-giving: both models can, and surely must, be concurrent.

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[72] Stephen Pritchard, 'Sound Unbound', *The Observer* (7 May 2017), https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/may/07/sound-unbound-barbican-review-andras-schiff-wigmore-hall?CMP=share_btn_link (accessed 1 December 2017).
[73] Previously used to store oil, The Tanks are large circular spaces in the foundations of the former power station.
[74] Arts Council England, 'Our Mission and Strategy', http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/our-mission-and-strategy (accessed 30 July 2017).

Indeed, performing classical music in non-traditional venues is not "easy money". Classical music performance typically involves rehearsing challenging works with multiple instrumentalists—an expensive process regardless of venue—and most of the organisations described in this chapter do not survive financially through ticket income alone: Nonclassical, the Multi-Story Orchestra, and the LCO have received grants through Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts scheme, and other public grants; the OAE finances the Night Shift through a variety of sources, including crowdfunding, donor support, and Arts Council England core funding; and the Little Orchestra collaborates with private donors. The founders of Limelight at the 100 Club were able to trade on their wide network of contacts within the classical music industry. The series featured some of classical music's most successful artists, who agreed to be paid "expenses only" either because of their fascination with the new format, to garner press interest, to promote an album, or a combination of these factors. Robbins acknowledges this to be an unsustainable business model and explains that, in part, the series folded because of the amount of time that would have been required to obtain sponsorship.[75] Yellow Lounge London likewise featured prominent musicians, but these were all affiliated to UMG, who, according to Kellersmann, covered their costs—a funding model possible for large-scale corporations but out-of-reach for an arts organisation.[76]

Conclusion: Lasting Change?

After almost fifteen years of classical music concerts in non-traditional venues, the idea has had a marked and varied influence on the sector; it is also an irreversible trend organisers are determined to, and believe will, broaden. Robbins suggests that well-known classical musicians, such as those who performed at Limelight, and the next generations of concertgoers, administrators, and managers, will entrench this change:

> If Nicola Benedetti [who performed at Limelight in 2009] decided that… before or after she played in [any] classical venue, she'd say a few words—that would have an impact. I think you are already seeing that more and more… And when younger people go into the management or directorship of orchestras[,] they're [now] questioning all of those assumptions [about concert-giving, so] there is a natural shift

[75] Information about funding was provided to the author in the interviews with Prokofiev, Whitley, Ames, Little, Holmes, and Robbins.
[76] Kellersmann, 'Der Frack ist bitte an der Garderobe abzugeben'.

> to "move with the times". The struggle [before] was that you had people who were never even *questioning* [but] just allowing a very old-fashioned format to continue.[77]

The normalisation of new, more relaxed formats has indeed relied on—and will continue to rely on—young composers and musicians being accustomed to different types of classical concerts, and having the confidence and support to stage events in a similar vein. As we have seen, this process need not put classical concerts in non-traditional venues and their associated practices (e.g. audience participation, freedom to move, shorter "sets", later starts to concerts) in a second "tier" of concert-giving; they can be an artistic equal to more traditional events. Whitley agrees:

> Multi-Story's biggest impact in terms of the rest of the sector is doing something… designed to engage audiences, but, artistically, [being] treated no differently… It's not an outreach event [or] part of the education programme; it's in the main Aldeburgh Festival [a June 2017 performance in an Ipswich multi-storey car park] and, similarly, the Prom is part of the Proms and recorded by [BBC] Radio 3, as the other Proms were… There are often education programmes designed to engage people, and "core" artistic work designed to do something artistically, "purely". I don't think these things necessarily need to be separate.[78]

If Whitley is correct, then an important part of facilitating change will be to emphasise to concertgoers, critics, and the public that, while the lens through which it is viewed is different, the *content* of the concert—the music itself—is still central. Brown is sanguine about this prospect:

> Fear of the unknown will gradually lose its grip as more and more musicians, managers, board members and concert-goers come to understand that it is not necessary to sacrifice artistic quality in order to make classical music concerts a little more interesting and appealing to a twenty-first-century audience.[79]

In the meantime, the next steps for research of this scene will be to scrutinise its audience's size and make-up in further detail. Such data would provide proper benchmarks to test success, to drive further innovations, and to strengthen the case of the organisations themselves when they seek funding. Similarly, research is needed to determine if attendance translates into longer-term

[77] Robbins, interview; emphasis Robbins's.
[78] Whitley, interview.
[79] Brown, 'Smart Concerts', 16.

engagement with classical music, such as exploring other works through recordings or attending other live events. Such work might help organisations reconsider concert spaces; for while acoustics are traditionally the first consideration when building a new hall, non-traditional events would suggest that the space's flexibility, in terms of both audience-performer engagement and the potential to alter layout, may be more significant to classical music's future. As Cook has argued, classical music 'continues to make sense when played in the innumerable ways that are made possible by [a] multiplicity of available performance parameters.'[80] If presenting Mozart in a car park or Bach in a nightclub allows classical music to be introduced to, and enjoyed by, a wider audience, then such concerts will only benefit the genre, and its sector, as a whole.

[80] Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 400.